

CARDIAC HARNESS DELIVERY DEVICE AND METHODRelated Applications

[0001] The present application is related to, and claims priority from, U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/427,079, filed November 15, 2002, the entirety of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

Background of the InventionField of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates generally to a device and method for delivering a cardiac harness onto the heart of a patient.

Description of the Related Art

[0003] Congestive heart failure ("CHF") is characterized by the failure of the heart to pump blood at sufficient flow rates to meet the metabolic demand of tissues, especially the demand for oxygen. It has been determined that a passive wrap, or cardiac harness, may increase the efficiency of a heart affected by congestive heart disease. While advances have been made in cardiac harness technology, a satisfactory device and method for delivering and positioning the cardiac harness onto a patient's heart has yet to be provided.

[0004] In one method, access to a patient's heart is achieved through an open chest procedure, wherein the sternum is split and separated to allow access to the heart. The cardiac harness is then positioned over the heart by manual manipulation. Such an open chest procedure is highly traumatic to the patient and, thus, remains a relatively undesirable option for cardiac harness delivery.

[0005] Present cardiac harness delivery devices do not both adequately retain the cardiac harness onto the delivery device and permit the harness to be easily released from the delivery device. For example, one delivery device utilizes sutures positioned around a circumference of the cardiac harness to secure it to the delivery device. Such arrangements render the cardiac harness difficult to release from the delivery device, especially on the rearward side of the heart. This is because the sutures have to be severed in order to release the cardiac harness from the delivery device. Such an arrangement would not be well suited for a minimally invasive procedure because an additional instrument would have to be

introduced to sever the sutures. Furthermore, attaching the cardiac harness to the delivery device only along a circumference tends to apply a localized load to the cardiac harness, which may cause damage to the device.

Summary of the Invention

[0006] Accordingly, a need exists for a cardiac harness delivery device that overcomes the disadvantages of the prior art. Preferably, the device allows release of the cardiac harness from a remote location. Accordingly, a preferred delivery device is configured, in one orientation, to support the cardiac harness in a compacted configuration to permit minimally invasive delivery of the cardiac harness through a relatively small incision in the patient. Preferably, the delivery device includes a plurality of push rods and the cardiac harness is secured to each push rod at at least two spaced apart locations along a longitudinal axis of the push rod. Accordingly, with such an arrangement, the applied load is spread along the length of the cardiac harness, thereby reducing the possibility of damaging the harness during delivery.

[0007] In accordance with another embodiment, the present invention involves an apparatus for delivering a cardiac harness, wherein the apparatus includes a support member. The cardiac harness is preloaded on the support member and attached to the support member by a line. The line is comprised of a series of interconnected loops, which form a releasable stitch.

[0008] In a further embodiment, the present invention involves an apparatus for delivering a cardiac harness including an elongate body having a proximal portion and a distal portion. The body has a cavity sized to contain the harness in a compacted configuration. A plurality of elongate push rods are longitudinally movable with respect to the body. The cardiac harness is releasably connected to each of the push rods such that advancement of the push rods in a distal direction moves the harness from the compacted configuration in the cavity to an expanded configuration outside the cavity. The apparatus also includes a releasing member which releases the connections between the push rods and the harness upon actuation of the member by a user.

[0009] Yet another embodiment of the present invention involves an apparatus for delivering a cardiac harness including an elongate body having a proximal portion and a

distal portion. The apparatus also includes a plurality of push rods longitudinally movable with respect to the body. The cardiac harness is releasably connected to each of push rods such that movement of the push rods in a distal direction advances the harness onto a heart of a patient. The harness is releasable from the push rods such that the push rods may be withdrawn from the harness proximally along a withdrawal path while the harness remains on the heart. The distal portion of the push rods have an inward facing surface which presses against the harness during the withdrawal. The inward facing surface is configured such that nonfrictional force components parallel to the withdrawal path and attributable to forces exerted by the inner surface on the harness are directed distally, without substantial nonfrictional force components being directed proximally.

[0010] Still another embodiment of the present invention involves a method of delivering a cardiac harness including providing a cardiac harness which is preloaded on a support member. The harness is attached to the support member by a line forming a releasable stitch. The method further includes positioning the harness so that the harness surrounds a portion of a heart of a patient, and disconnecting the harness from the support member by releasing the releasable stitch without cutting the line.

[0011] A further embodiment of the present invention involves an apparatus for creating a passage through the pericardium of a patient to permit access of a cardiac harness delivery device to the heart. The apparatus includes an introducer sleeve and a dilator sleeve. The introducer sleeve has an outer wall defining a proximal end and a distal end. The outer wall has a reduced diameter portion adjacent the distal end. The reduced diameter portion defines a reduced orientation having a first diameter. The dilator sleeve is sized and shaped to be insertable into the introducer sleeve to urge the reduced diameter portion into an expanded orientation having a second diameter, larger than the first diameter. The second diameter is of a size sufficient to permit the apparatus to pass therethrough.

[0012] A still further embodiment of the present invention involves an apparatus for assisting the loading of a cardiac harness onto a delivery device having a plurality of elongated push rods. The apparatus includes an outer wall defining a generally funnel shaped portion. The funnel shaped portion includes a plurality of channels configured to receive the

plurality of elongated push rods. The outer wall is configured to support the push rods in an outwardly splayed orientation.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0013] These and other features, aspects and advantages of the present invention are described with reference to drawings of a preferred embodiment, which are intended to illustrate, but not to limit, the present invention. The drawings contain 27 figures.

[0014] Figure 1 is a perspective view of a cardiac harness delivery device constructed in accordance with certain features, aspects and advantages of the present invention. The illustrated delivery device comprises a body portion, including an elongate shaft and a housing, and a movable portion, including a control assembly and a plurality of elongate push rods. A cardiac harness is carried by distal end portions of the plurality of push rods.

[0015] Figure 2 is an enlarged, partial cutaway view of a distal portion of the delivery device of Figure 1 showing the cardiac harness in a compacted configuration within a cavity defined by the housing.

[0016] Figure 3 is a perspective view of the delivery device of Figure 1 with the movable portion in an advanced position relative to the body portion.

[0017] Figure 4 is an enlarged view of a distal portion of the delivery device of Figure 1 indicated by line 4-4 of Figure 3.

[0018] Figure 5 is a cross-sectional view of one of the plurality of push rods taken along line 5-5 of Figure 4. Figure 5 illustrates a line, forming a releasable stitch, to secure the cardiac harness to the push rod.

[0019] Figure 6 is an enlarged, side view of the control assembly of the delivery device of Figure 1 indicated by line 6-6 of Figure 3. The illustrated control assembly includes a body portion, a cover and a release member.

[0020] Figure 7a is a plan view of the body portion of the control assembly of Figure 6, taken along line 7-7 of Figure 6. Figure 7a illustrates a plurality of channels defined by the body portion of the control assembly. The channels are configured to receive portions of the line associated with each push rod.

[0021] Figure 7b is an enlarged view of the body portion of the control assembly of Figure 7a illustrating the routing of the line portions within the channels of the control assembly.

[0022] Figure 7c is an enlarged view of the arrangement of Figure 7b, showing a release member being pulled away from a body portion of the control assembly.

[0023] Figure 8 is a cross-sectional view of the control assembly of Figures 6 and 7, taken along line 8-8 of Figure 7a.

[0024] Figure 9 is a cross-sectional view of the control assembly of Figures 6 and 7, taken along line 9-9 of Figure 7a.

[0025] Figure 10 is a cross-sectional view of one of the plurality of elongate push rods, taken along line 10-10 of Figure 8.

[0026] Figure 11a is a cross-sectional view of one of the plurality of push rods, illustrating the releasable stitch of Figure 5 being unraveled to release the cardiac harness from the push rod.

[0027] Figure 11b is a cross-sectional view of the push rod of Figure 11a, illustrating the releasable stitch in a further unraveled condition.

[0028] Figure 11c is a cross-sectional view of the push rod of Figure 11a, illustrating the releasable stitch in a substantially released condition.

[0029] Figure 12 is a cross-sectional view of a distal tip of one of the plurality of elongate push rods, taken along line 12-12 of Figure 4.

[0030] Figure 13 is a side elevational view of an introducer sleeve portion of an introducer assembly for facilitating introduction of the delivery device of Figures 1-12 through the pericardium surrounding the heart of a patient.

[0031] Figure 14 is a side elevational view of the introducer assembly, illustrated in an unassembled condition and including the introducer sleeve and a dilator sleeve.

[0032] Figure 15 is a side elevational view of the introducer assembly in an assembled condition, with the dilator sleeve disposed within the introducer sleeve.

[0033] Figure 16 is a perspective view of a heart having a small incision in the pericardium to permit the delivery device to access the heart.

[0034] Figure 17 is a perspective view of the heart of Figure 16 with the introducer sleeve of the introducer assembly of Figure 14 positioned within the incision in the pericardium.

[0035] Figure 18 is a perspective view of the heart of Figure 16 with the introducer assembly, in an assembled condition, providing an access pathway through the pericardium for introduction of the delivery device.

[0036] Figure 19 is a side elevational view of the delivery device of Figures 1-12, with a pump member, or, specifically, a syringe, attached to a suction assembly of the delivery device. The suction assembly includes a suction cup member, which is configured to securely hold the heart relative to the delivery device during advancement of the cardiac harness over the heart.

[0037] Figure 20 is a side elevational view of the delivery device of Figure 19 with the cardiac harness in a partially advanced position.

[0038] Figure 21 is a side elevational view of the delivery device of Figure 19 with the cardiac harness in a fully advanced position and the releasing member being actuated to release the cardiac harness from the delivery device.

[0039] Figure 22 is a side elevational view of the delivery device of Figure 19 with the cardiac harness being completely released and the plurality of push rods being retracted.

[0040] Figure 23 is a side elevational view of the delivery device of Figure 19 with the cardiac harness completely released and illustrating the delivery device being withdrawn from the heart.

[0041] Figure 24 is a side elevational view of a loading device, configured to assist in loading a cardiac harness to the delivery device.

[0042] Figure 25 is a cross-sectional view of the loading device of Figure 24, taken along the line 25-25 of Figure 24.

[0043] Figure 26 is a bottom plan view of the loading device of Figure 24, taken along the line 26-26 of Figure 24.

[0044] Figure 27 is a cross-sectional view of the loading device of Figure 24 illustrating the cardiac harness loaded onto the plurality of push rods.

[0045] Figure 28a is a cross-sectional view of one of the plurality of push rods illustrating the formation of an initial loop in the line comprising the releasable stitch for securing the cardiac harness to the push rod.

[0046] Figure 28b is a partial cross-sectional view of the push rod of Figure 28a illustrating the initial formation of a second loop.

[0047] Figure 28c is a view of the push rod of Figure 28b illustrating the second loop being passed through the initial loop.

[0048] Figure 29 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a control assembly.

[0049] Figure 30 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a push rod adapted to be used with the control assembly of Figure 29.

[0050] Figure 31 is an enlarged view of a distal portion of push rod of Figure 30 taken along line 31-31.

[0051] Figure 32 is cross-sectional view of the push rod of Figure 30 taken along line 32-32.

[0052] Figure 33 shows the push rod of Figure 5, illustrating another embodiment and arrangement of a line forming a releasable stitch to secure a cardiac harness to the push rod.

[0053] Figure 34 is a plan view of a body portion of the control assembly of Figure 29.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiment

[0054] Figures 1-11 illustrate a preferred embodiment of a cardiac harness delivery device, which is generally referred to by the reference numeral 30. In a preferred embodiment, the delivery device 30 is configured to releasably support a cardiac reinforcement device (CRD), such as a cardiac harness, and assist in the advancement of the cardiac harness over the heart of a patient. Once the cardiac harness is positioned on the heart, the delivery device 30 preferably is configured to release the harness and be retractable without causing undesired shifting of the cardiac harness relative to the heart.

[0055] In the illustrated arrangement, the delivery device 30 permits delivery of a cardiac harness in a minimally invasive manner. That is, preferably the device 30 permits

accurate delivery, positioning, and release of the cardiac harness through a relatively small incision in a patient. However, the preferred, or alternative, embodiments of the delivery device 30 may also be used to deliver a cardiac harness in an open chest, or other minimally invasive procedure. Further, an embodiment preferably is configured to enable indirect visualization of at least portions of the device 30 during surgery. For example, portions of the device may be radiopaque so as to be visualized and guided by fluoroscopy or other methods.

[0056] With specific reference to Figure 1, the illustrated delivery device 30 generally includes a body portion comprised of a handle 32 affixed to the proximal end of a hollow, elongate shaft 34. Preferably, a housing 36 is affixed to a distal end of the elongate shaft 34. The illustrated delivery device 30 also includes a movable portion comprised of a control assembly 38 and a plurality of elongate push rods 40. The control assembly 38 and, thus, the push rods 40, are axially slidable along the shaft 34.

[0057] Preferably, the plurality of push rods 40 extend in a distal direction from the control assembly 38 and pass through the housing 36. With reference also to Figure 2, a cardiac harness 42 is releasably supported on the distal end portions of the elongate push rods 40 in a compacted configuration within the housing 36. Preferably, the cardiac harness 42 comprises an elastic sleeve configured to fit around the heart and to exert a compressive force on the heart. In the illustrated embodiment, the harness 42 comprises several interconnected rows of undulating elastic members. Preferred cardiac harnesses are described in greater detail in U.S. Patent Application No. 09/634,043, filed August 8, 2000; U.S. Application No. 10/242,016, filed September 10, 2002; U.S. Application No. 10/287,723, filed October 31, 2002; and U.S. Application No. 60/409,113, filed September 5, 2002, the entirety of each of which are incorporated by reference herein. It is to be understood that aspects of the delivery device 30 discussed herein can be used in connection with several other types of cardiac harnesses.

[0058] The term "cardiac harness" as used herein is a broad term that refers to a device fit onto a patient's heart to apply a compressive force on the heart during at least a portion of the cardiac cycle. A device that is intended to be fit onto and reinforce a heart and

which may be referred to in the art as a "girdle," "sock," "jacket," "CRD," or the like is included within the meaning of "cardiac harness."

[0059] The control assembly 38 and plurality of push rods 40 are movable axially with respect to the shaft 34 from the retracted position illustrated in Figure 1 to an advanced, or deployed position, as illustrated in Figures 3 and 4. Thus, the delivery device 30 is configured to deploy the cardiac harness 42 from a compacted configuration within the housing 36 to an expanded position outside of the housing 36 thereby delivering the cardiac harness 42 onto a heart 43 (Figures 3 and 4), as is described in greater detail below.

[0060] The handle 32 is fixed to the shaft 34 in the illustrated embodiment. However, it is to be understood that in other arrangements the handle 32 may be movable relative to the shaft 34 along with the control assembly 38. Additionally, another embodiment may not employ a handle 32. Further, with reference to Figure 1, a stop 39 preferably is provided on the shaft 34. The stop 39 comprises a raised portion that engages the control assembly 38 so that the assembly 38 cannot move distally over the shaft 34 beyond the stop 39. As such, the harness 42 is not advanced too far over the heart 43.

[0061] With reference again to Figure 2, the housing 36 preferably is a relatively thin-walled, tubular member. Desirably, the housing 36 is supported substantially concentric with the shaft 34 to define an interior cavity 44 between an inner surface of the housing 36 and an outer surface of the shaft 34. Preferably, the cavity 44 is sized and shaped to contain the cardiac harness 42 in a compacted configuration therein.

[0062] As indicated above, preferably the device 30 is configured to deliver the cardiac harness 42 in a minimally invasive procedure. Accordingly, a preferred housing 36 has a nominal outer diameter of less than about 2 inches and, more preferably, less than about 1.5 inches. However, in additional, non-minimally invasive embodiments, the housing 36, if provided, may be larger than the values given above. In such arrangements, the harness 42 may be supported by the device 30 in a configuration substantially similar to the configuration of the harness 42 when positioned on a heart. That is, the cardiac harness does not have to be supported in a "compacted" configuration by the device, but may be supported in a configuration closer to its relaxed size and shape.

[0063] In the embodiment shown in Figures 1-3, the housing 36 is generally cylindrical. It is to be understood that, in another preferred embodiment, the housing is elliptical. As such, the housing may have a major axis and minor axis. This configuration may be especially beneficial for advancing the housing through body passages having relatively narrow clearance, such as advancing the housing between ribs.

[0064] With continued reference to Figure 2, a base portion 46 of the housing 36 preferably defines a closed end of the cavity 44 and supports the housing 36 relative to the shaft 34. The base end 46 may be secured to the shaft 34 by mechanical fasteners, adhesives or other suitable methods apparent to one of skill in the art. In one embodiment, the base end 46 is rotatable relative to the shaft 34. Preferably, the distal end of the housing is open to define an open, distal end of the cavity 44 to permit the cardiac harness 42 to be advanced from the cavity 44.

[0065] Preferably, an outer wall 48 of the housing 36 defines a plurality of channels 50 (Figure 4) extending axially throughout the length of the housing 36. Each of the channels 50 preferably is sized and shaped to slidably receive one of the plurality of push rods 40. Thus, preferably, the number of channels 50 is equal to the number of push rods 40. Further, each channel 50 preferably opens into a cavity 44 along at least a portion of the length of the channel 50.

[0066] In the illustrated embodiment, six push rods 40 and channels 50 are provided and are substantially equally spaced around the circumference of the housing 36. In an additional arrangement, however, the channels 50 may be omitted and the push rods 40 may simply be restrained from moving radially outwardly by the sidewall 48 of the housing 36. Other suitable arrangements to guide the push rods 40 and house the cardiac harness 42 may also be used.

[0067] With continued reference to Figures 1-4, the delivery device 30 preferably includes a positioning arrangement configured to hold the delivery device 30 in a desired position relative to the heart 43. In the illustrated arrangement, the positioning arrangement comprises a suction cup member 52 supported on a distal end of the shaft 34. A tube 54 extends through the shaft 34 and is connected to the suction cup member 52. A distal end of the tube 54 opens into an interior space defined by the suction cup member 52. The proximal

end of the tube 54 includes a connector 58 that allows connection of the tube 54 to a pump member such as a syringe or other source of vacuum. Accordingly, once the delivery device is properly positioned, air may be withdrawn from within the tube 54 to create a vacuum condition within the interior space of the suction cup member 52, thereby permitting the suction cup member 52 to securely hold the heart of a patient.

[0068] A clip 56 secures the tube 54 relative to the handle 32 to prevent the proximal end of the tube 54 from passing through the shaft 34. Thus, the clip 56 also operates to secure the suction cup member 52 to the delivery device 30. In a preferred embodiment, the tube 54 and suction cup member 52 are not rigidly affixed to the shaft 34 so that the shaft 34 may be moved relative to the tube 54 and suction cup 52. In another embodiment, the shaft 34 and a proximal end of the suction cup 52 are threaded so that the suction cup may be threaded onto the shaft. In still other embodiments, other structure may be used to releasably connect the suction cup to the shaft.

[0069] With reference next to Figure 5, preferably the cardiac harness 42 is secured to a distal end portion of each of the plurality of push rods 40 by a line, generally referred to by the reference numeral 60, that is configured into a releasable stitch. As shown in Figure 5, a line 60a is associated with one of the plurality of push rods 40 and is arranged into a releasable stitch configured to secure the cardiac harness 42 to the push rod 40. Although not individually illustrated, preferably, each of a plurality of such lines 60b-f secure the cardiac harness 42 to a corresponding one of the remainder of push rods 40 in a manner similar to line 60a, which is illustrated in Figure 5. Desirably, the line 60a is arranged into a series of interconnected loops that are releasable by actuation of the control assembly 38 in a manner described in greater detail below. Release of the interconnected loops, in turn, releases the cardiac harness 42 from the push rod 40.

[0070] The illustrated push rod 40 includes a plurality of throughholes, or openings 62, 64a-i, extending from an outward facing surface 40a of the push rod 40 to an inward facing surface 40b of the push rod 40. In the illustrated embodiment, ten openings 62, 64a-i are provided, however, other numbers of openings may be provided to permit other types and sizes of cardiac harnesses to be secured to the delivery device 30. Desirably, the openings 64a-i are equally spaced from one another, with the space between the distal most

opening 62 and the opening 64a being less than the equal spacing between openings 64a-i. Preferably, the space between the openings 62 and 64a is sufficient to accommodate the diameter of an individual wire, which forms an uppermost row 66a of the illustrated cardiac harness 42. In addition, preferably the remainder of the openings 64a-i are spaced from one another a distance substantially equal to a height of one row 66b-h of the cardiac harness. Such an arrangement permits positioning of the wire of a single row 66b-h of the cardiac harness 42 between each pair of openings 64a-i.

[0071] Although the line 60a is shown as being spaced from both the outward facing surface 40a and inward facing surface 40b in Figure 5, preferably, the line 60a is pulled tight after passing through the openings 62, 64a-i to secure the cardiac harness 42 directly against the inward facing surface 40b of the push rod 40. The spaced orientation of the line 60a depicted in Figure 5 is merely for the purpose of clearly illustrating the configuration of the releasable stitch.

[0072] In a preferred embodiment of the releasable stitch, a first end of the line 60a is arranged into a slip knot 80, which defines a first loop 82a positioned on the outward facing surface 40a side of the push rod 40. The slip knot 80 desirably is created near one end of the line 60a such that, along with the first loop 82a, a short end portion 83 of the line 60a is created. The remainder of the line 60a is arranged into interconnecting loops to create the releasable stitch, as is described below.

[0073] The line 60a passes through the distal most opening 62 to the inward facing surface 40b side of the push rod 40. Preferably, the line 60a then passes around the wire of the uppermost row 66a of the cardiac harness 42 before passing through the opening 64a back to the outward facing surface 40a side of the push rod 40. Thus, between the openings 62 and 64a, the line 60a creates a securing portion 84a that holds the row 66a of the cardiac harness 42 against the inward facing surface 40b of the push rod 40.

[0074] Once on the outward facing surface 40a side of the push rod 40, the line 60a passes through the first loop 82a and is arranged to form a second loop 82b. Preferably, the second loop 82b is large enough so that it extends toward the proximal end of the push rod 40 a sufficient distance to pass beyond the next adjacent opening 64b. The line 60a then passes back through the first loop 82a and the opening 64a to the inward facing surface 40b

side of the push rod 40. The line 60a creates another securing portion 84b, which secures a wire of a second row 66b of the cardiac harness 42 to the push rod 40.

[0075] Preferably, in a similar manner, interconnected loops 82c through 82h are formed. Each of the loops 82c-h are positioned on the outward facing surface 40a side of the push rod 40 and correspond with respective securing portions 84c-84h, which secure a respective wire of each row 66c-h of the cardiac harness 42 against an inward facing surface 40b of the push rod 40. Although, preferably, each securing portion 84a-h of the line 60a secures a single row 66a-h of the cardiac harness 42 to the push rod 40, in other configurations more or less than one row of the harness 42 may be secured by a single securing portion 84a-h. Further, although in the illustrated embodiment, one hole 64 of the push rod 40 generally corresponds to one row 66 of the associated harness 42, it is to be understood that, in other embodiments, one row 66 may correspond with more or less than one hole 64 and more or less than one securing portion 84.

[0076] In accordance with this arrangement, the cardiac harness 42 is secured to each push rod 40 at at least two longitudinally-spaced locations. In the illustrated embodiment, the harness 42 is secured to each push rod 40 at eight longitudinally-spaced locations, or each of the eight rows 66a-h of the cardiac harness 42 is secured to each of the push rods 40.

[0077] Preferably, a proximal-most, or retaining, loop 86a is arranged to inhibit the remaining loops 82a-h from unraveling prematurely. In a preferred arrangement, the retaining loop 86a passes through the next distal loop 82h in a manner similar to the arrangement of loops 82a-h as described above. The retaining loop 86a, however, has a sufficient length to extend in a proximal direction along the push rod 40 to the control assembly 38. Preferably, the loop 86a passes through the lowermost opening 64i to the inward facing surface 40b side of the push rod 40 and is extended along the push rod 40 in a proximal direction. Within the control assembly 38, the loop 86a is looped around a retaining rod 68 (shown schematically in Figure 5).

[0078] The remaining end portion 100a of the line 60a, after forming the retaining loop 86a, is passed through the loop 82h and the opening 64h to the inward facing surface 40b side of the push rod 40. The end portion 100a of the line 60a also extends in a proximal

direction along the push rod 40 and is tied off on the retaining rod 68. Thus, in the illustrated arrangement, unravelment of the releasable stitch is prevented by the combination of the retaining loop 86a being looped around the retaining rod 68, and the end portion 100 of the line 60a being tied onto, the retaining rod 68. Although shown tied onto the retaining rod 68, desirably, the end portion 100 is tied off onto a releasable portion of the control assembly 38, rather than the retaining rod 68 itself, as will be described in greater detail below.

[0079] In an alternative arrangement, the retaining loop 86a may not be looped around the retaining rod 68, but may be inhibited from unraveling by an alternatively suitable arrangement. For example, it is contemplated that the retaining loop 86a may be formed approximately the same size as the remainder of the interconnected loops 82a-h and may be tucked between the adjacent loop 82h and the outward facing surface 40a of the push rod 40. Thus, the retaining loop 86a is inhibited from unraveling by a frictional force of the adjacent loop 82h holding the retaining loop 86a against the outward facing surface 40a. When a sufficient pulling force is applied to the end portion 100, the retaining loop 86a overcomes the frictional force of the loop 82h and the outward facing surface 40a and is drawn through the opening 64h, thus permitting unraveling of the releasable stitch.

[0080] With reference next to Figures 6-9, a preferred embodiment of the control assembly 38 is described in greater detail. As indicated above, the control assembly 38 is movable axially relative to the shaft 34 of the delivery device 30. Preferably, the control assembly 38 includes a position-retaining arrangement, such as a friction brake assembly 102, for example. The friction brake assembly 102 is configured to permit the control assembly 38 to be selectively retained in a desired position relative to the shaft 34. Preferably, the friction brake assembly 102 is configured to be easily actuatable, along with movement of the control assembly 38, by one hand of a user of the device 30.

[0081] With particular reference to Figures 6 and 9, the illustrated friction brake assembly 102 includes a brake element 104 and a biasing member, such as a spring 106. The brake element 104 includes an annular central portion 104a surrounding the shaft 34. Opposing end portions 104b, 104c extend in an outward direction from the central portion 104a substantially opposite from one another. The first end portion 104b is retained within a channel 108 of the control assembly 38, preferably by a pin 110. The pin 110 is supported

within cavities (not shown) of the control assembly 38 on each side of the channel 108. Thus, the brake element 104 is pivotable generally about an outer surface of the pin 110.

[0082] The spring 106 is retained within a cavity 111 and is arranged to bias the second end 104c of the brake element 104 away from the control assembly 38. Preferably, the spring 106 biases the brake element 104 such that an inner diameter-defining surface of the central portion 104a is in frictional contact with the shaft 34 so as to secure the control assembly 38 in a desired position relative to the shaft 34. The brake element 104 may be pivoted toward the control assembly 38 by pushing the end 104c toward the control assembly 38 to disengage the brake element 104 from the shaft 34 and permit relative movement between the control assembly 38 and the shaft 34. In another embodiment, two such brake elements 104 are provided. However, each brake element is oriented to pivot in an opposite direction. As such, one brake element better prevents distal movement of the assembly relative to the shaft, and the other brake element better prevents proximal movement of the assembly relative to the shaft.

[0083] With particular reference to Figures 6 and 8, the control assembly 38 preferably includes a substantially cylindrical body portion 112. A plurality of passages, generally referred to by the reference numeral 114, extend axially through the body portion 112 of the control assembly 38. In the illustrated embodiment, the passages 114 are substantially cylindrical in shape and are equally distributed in a circular arrangement coaxial with the shaft 34. Preferably, the passages 114 are generally aligned with corresponding channels 50 formed in the housing 36.

[0084] A cover 116 is fixed to a proximal end of the body portion 112. The cover 116 closes a proximal end of the passages 114 and the cavity 111. A plurality of fasteners, such as screws 118, engage corresponding threaded apertures 120 (Figure 7a) of the body portion 112 to secure the cover 116 to the body portion 112.

[0085] With reference also to Figure 7a, in a preferred embodiment, the body portion 112 includes six passages 114, referred to specifically by the reference numerals 114a-114f. As a matter of convenience, the passages 114a-114f are referred to herein by their relative positions as depicted in Figures 7a-c. As such, passages 114a and 114f comprise an upper pair of passages, passages 114b and 114e comprise a central pair of passages and

passages 114c and 114d comprise a lower pair of passages. Passage 114a is positioned to the right of a vertical axis Av passing through the center of the shaft 34 in Figures 7a and 7b. The remaining passages 114b-114f are distributed in a clockwise direction in an equally spaced relation to one another.

[0086] With particular reference to Figures 7a and 8, each of the above-described passages 114a-f are configured to receive a proximal end of one of the push rods 40. The push rods 40 are secured within their respective passages 114a-f by a shaft 150 passing through an opening (not shown) within the push rod 40 and being supported by the body portion 112 of the control assembly 38. Thus, as described above, the push rods 40 are fixed for axial movement with the control assembly 38.

[0087] In the illustrated embodiment, the push rods are supported generally in the center of the passages 114a-f, with their respective inner surfaces 40a arranged generally tangentially to the center axis of the shaft 34. In addition, with reference also to Figure 10, a center portion 40c of each push rod 40 is generally semicircular in cross-section such that the inward facing surface 40a defines a recess 152. Preferably, the recess 152 is configured to accommodate one of the lines 60a-f, respectively, as described above in relation to Figure 5. As shown in Figure 10, the line 60a consists of the retaining loop 86a and the free end 100a, as is also described above in relation to Figure 5.

[0088] With reference next to Figures 7a-c, a plurality of channels, referred to generally by the reference numeral 122, are defined by a proximal end surface of the body portion 112 of the control assembly 38. Each of the channels 122 interconnect two of the passages 114a-114f and are configured to accommodate a portion of one or more lines, such as the line 60a, as is described in greater detail below. Specifically, in a preferred arrangement, a first channel 122a extends generally parallel to the vertical axis Av and interconnects the passages 114a and 114c. Similarly, a second channel 122b extends generally parallel to the channel 122a and interconnects the passages 114d and 114f. Third and fourth channels 122c, 122d interconnect the passages 114a and 114b and passages 114b and 114c, respectively. Similarly, fifth and sixth channels 122e, 122f interconnect passages 114f and 114e and passages 114e and 114d, respectively.

[0089] Preferably, each of the channels 122a-f are arranged to generally intersect a center of the passages 114 that they interconnect. The channels 122a, 122c and 122d form a triangular shape on the right-hand side of the vertical axis A_V. The channels 122b, 122e and 122f form a triangular shape on the left-hand side of the vertical axis A_V, which shape is a mirror image of the triangular shape defined by channels 122a, 122c and 122d.

[0090] An additional channel 134 interconnects the passages 114a and 114f and extends in a direction generally parallel to a horizontal axis A_H as depicted in Figures 7a-c. The channel 134 is defined by a proximal surface of the body portion 112 and, preferably, is substantially larger in both width and depth than the channels 122a-f. Preferably, the channel 134 has a width approximately one-half the diameter of the passages 114a, 114f and is semicircular in cross-sectional shape. Desirably, the channel 134 passes approximately through the centers of the passages 114a, 114f.

[0091] The control assembly 38 also includes a release member 136 that preferably is configured to selectively release the releasable stitch, thereby releasing the cardiac harness 42 from the delivery device 30. With reference also to Figure 9, a portion of the release member 136 preferably is received within a cavity 137 of the body portion 112, which is located on an opposite side of the horizontal axis A_H from the channel 134. The cavity 137 defines a support surface 138 which, along with a corresponding portion of the distal surface of the cover 116 (see Figure 6), supports a portion of the release member 136.

[0092] Desirably, the retaining rod 68, illustrated schematically in Figure 5, comprises a pair of rods 68a,b that are part of the release member 136 as shown in Figures 7a-c and 9. The pair of rods 68a,b extend outwardly (depicted vertically in Figures 7a-c) from the release member 136 and are slidably received in corresponding bores 139 formed within the body portion 112 of the control assembly 38. Preferably, the bores 139 are spaced on opposing sides of the vertical axis A_V. The rods 68a,b preferably are long enough such that distal end portions of the rods 68a,b pass through the channel 134.

[0093] The release member 136 defines a pull portion 140, which extends in an outward direction away from the body portion 112. The pull portion 140 preferably is generally annular in shape, such that a user of the delivery device 30 can grasp the release member 136 with one or more fingers extending through a hole defined by the pull 140. It is

to be understood that other suitable constructions may also be used to permit a user of the device 30 to grasp and pull the release member 136 away from the body portion 112, such as providing a pull tab, for example.

[0094] The release member 136 also includes a preferably trapezoidal shaped cavity 142 extending inwardly from an inward facing surface 144 of the release member 136. The cavity 142 preferably is sized and shaped to avoid closing off the passages 114c and 114d.

[0095] The release member 136 preferably includes an attachment portion 146 that extends from a wall of the cavity 142 and toward the body portion 112. Preferably, the attachment portion 146 is arranged so that, as shown on Figures 7b and 9, a space 147 is disposed between the attachment portion 146 and the support surface 138 of the body portion 112. As shown more particularly in Figure 9, the attachment portion 146 preferably is not as thick as the release member 136 and, desirably is about $\frac{1}{4}$ or less of the thickness of the release member 136. As shown particularly in Figure 9, an upper surface 149 of the attachment portion 146 preferably is spaced 147 from the support surface 138 of the body portion 112.

[0096] With reference again to Figures 7a-c and 8, the attachment portion 146 preferably includes a plurality of holes 148 extending therethrough in a direction generally parallel to a longitudinal axis of the shaft 34. In the illustrated embodiment, there are six holes 148, one hole 148 corresponding to each of the passages 114a-f.

[0097] With particular reference to Figure 7b, the free ends 100 of the lines 60 preferably are tied to corresponding holes 148 of the attachment portion 146. As a more specific example, free end 100a of line 60a extends downwardly along the corresponding rod 40 (see Figure 10) and enters passage 114a, from which it is directed into channel 122a and into the cavity 142. The free end 100a is then tied onto one of the holes 148 of the attachment portion 146. Thus, the free end 100a of the line 60a is affixed to the release member 136.

[0098] The retention loop 86a portion of line 60a also extends downwardly along the corresponding rod 40 (see Figure 10) and into the passage 114a. From the passage 114a the loop 86a is directed into the channel 134 and, as illustrated in Figure 7b, is looped about

the right-most rod 68a of the release member 136. Looping the retention loop 86a around the rod 68a anchors the loop 86a and thus prevents the line 60a from unraveling. Note that for convenience in illustration, the retention loop 86a, which actually comprises two portions of line as shown in Figure 10, is illustrated in Figure 7b as a single line. This is done to present a less-cluttered drawing.

[0099] The other free ends 100b-f and retention loops 86b-f preferably are arranged similarly, although they are customized for their respective positions in the device. For example, free end 100b extends from passage 114b through channel 122d into the cavity 142 and is affixed to a hole 148. Free end 100c is directed directly from passage 114c into the cavity 142 and is affixed to a hole 148. Free end 100d also extends directly from the passage 114b into the cavity 142 and is affixed to a hole 148. Free end 100e extends out of passage 114e through channel 122f into the cavity 142 and is affixed to a hole 148. Free end 100f extends from passage 114f and through channel 122b into the cavity 142 and is affixed to a hole 148.

[0100] With regard to the retention loops 86, retention loop 86b extends from passage 114b through channel 122c into channel 134 and is looped around the right rod 68a. Loop 86c extends from passage 114c through channel 122a into channel 134 and is looped about the right rod 68a. Retention loop 86d extends from passage 114d through channel 122b into channel 134 and is looped about the left rod 68b. Retention loop 86e extends out of passage 114e through channel 122e into channel 134 and is looped about the left rod 68b. Retention loop 86f extends from passage 114f into channel 134 and is looped about the left rod 68b.

[0101] In operation, the release member 136 is configured to release loops 86a-f, unravel the lines 60a-f from the push rods 40 and thereby release the cardiac harness 42 from the push rods 40. More specifically, and with reference to Figure 7c, as the release member 136 is pulled away from the body 112 of the control assembly 38, the rods 68a-b are also pulled through the channel 134 such that the retention loops 86a-f are released from the rods 68a-b. Simultaneously, because the free ends 100a-f of the lines 60a are tied onto one of the holes 148 of the attachment portion 146, the release member 136 pulls on the free ends 100a-f. Since the retention loops 86a-f are released from the rods 68a-b, pulling of the free

ends 100a-f unravels the lines 60a-f, thereby releasing the cardiac harness 42 from the push rods 40, as is described further below in connection with Figures 11a-c.

[0102] Figures 11a through 11c illustrate a preferred sequence of unravelment of the releasable stitch of line 60a. With additional reference to Figure 5, as described above, in a secured position of the releasable stitch, preferably the retaining loop 86a is looped around the rod 68 of the release member 136 to inhibit unravelment of the stitch. However, when the rod 68 is retracted to release the retaining loop 86a, and the free end 100a is pulled by the release member 136, the retaining loop 86a is pulled through the loop 82h by the free end 100a.

[0103] Returning to Figure 11a, as the release member 136 continues to be pulled away from the main body 112 of the control assembly 38, the loop 82h is pulled through the loop 82g in a manner similar to that described above. With reference to Figure 11b, as the free end 100a continues to be pulled, each successive loop 82g, 82f, 82e, 82d, 82c, 82b, 82a is pulled through its distally-adjacent loop. In Figure 11b, loop 82e is illustrated as being pulled through loop 82d. Subsequently, loop 82d is pulled through loop 82c, which is then pulled through loop 82b. Finally, loop 82b is finally pulled through the initial loop 82a, as illustrated in Figure 12c.

[0104] The initial loop 82a, which preferably comprises a slip knot 80, preferably completely unties itself and is pulled through the distal-most opening 62 to release the cardiac harness 42 from the push rod 40. In a similar manner, because the remainder of the lines 60b-f are also secured to the release member 136, the cardiac harness 42 preferably is simultaneously released from each of the plurality of push rods 40.

[0105] With next reference to Figure 12, a distal end of one of the plurality of push rods 40 is shown in section. As described above, the push rod 40 has an inward facing surface 40b, which faces a center axis of shaft 34, and an outward facing surface 40a, which faces away from a center axis of the shaft 34. Thus, in operation, the inner surface 40b of each of the push rods 40 is positioned adjacent to, and preferably in contact with, the cardiac harness 42.

[0106] The distal end of the push rod 40 includes a tip portion 154 that, in a preferred arrangement, is canted outwardly away from a center axis of the shaft 34. Thus, the

inner surface 40b of the tip portion 154 defines an angle θ with respect to a line 156 extending from the inner surface 40b of the remainder of the push rod 40. In a preferred arrangement, the angle θ is between about 5-60 degrees, and more preferably is between about 10-45 degrees. Most preferably, the angle is between about 15-35 degrees.

[0107] As will be appreciated by one of skill in the art, although preferably the inner surface 40b is generally planar in a relaxed orientation, the push rod 40 is configured to be deflectable so as to splay outwardly from a distal end of the housing 36 so as to conform to an outer surface of a patient's heart while in use. Accordingly, the push rod 40 is not always oriented such that the inner surface 40b is necessarily planar. However, when the push rod 40 is in a splayed orientation, any given point on the surface 40b preferably is either the same perpendicular distance from a center axis of the shaft 34, or a greater distance, than any point on the surface 40b proximal to the given point. That is, preferably, the inward facing surface 40b does not have any inwardly extending portions when moving from a proximal end of the push rod 40 toward a distal end of the push rod 40.

[0108] In operation, once the cardiac harness 42 has been positioned on a patient's heart, the control assembly 38 is retracted relative to the shaft 34 such that the plurality of push rods 40 are also retracted relative to the cardiac harness 42. Upon retraction of the delivery device 30, relative motion is experienced between the inner surface 40b and the cardiac harness 42. That is, the inner surface 40b of the push rod 40 slides along the cardiac harness 42 along a withdrawal path in a withdrawal direction W_D , as indicated by the arrow in Figure 12.

[0109] Preferably, the tip 154 is configured with an angle such that upon sliding motion of the push rod 40 relative to the cardiac harness 42, no force is exerted by the inner surface 40b tending to drag the cardiac harness 42 from its position on the heart. That is, the construction of the inward facing surface 40b of the push rods 40 is such that non-frictional force components parallel to the withdrawal path and attributable to forces exerted by the inner surface 40b on the cardiac harness 42 are directed distally, without substantial non-frictional force components directed proximally, or in the withdrawal direction W_D . Advantageously, once the cardiac harness 42 is properly positioned on the heart, retraction of the push rods 40 does not disturb the positioning of the harness 42.

[0110] With next reference to Figures 13-17, an introducer assembly 160 assists in creating an access opening in the pericardium of a patient's heart to permit access of the delivery device 30 to the heart. In the illustrated embodiment, the introducer assembly 160 includes an introducer sleeve 162 and a dilator sleeve 164.

[0111] With particular reference to Figure 13, the introducer sleeve 162 preferably is a thin-walled, tubular element having a substantially circular cross-sectional shape. A distal end 163 of the sleeve 162 comprises a plurality of flared portions 165 that are biased outwardly from a longitudinal axis A_S of the sleeve 162. In the illustrated embodiment, a portion of the sleeve 162 is divided into several elongate strips 166. Preferably, the elongate strips 166 are spaced apart from each other. In a preferred arrangement, about the distal-most 2/3 of the length of the introducer sleeve 162 is divided into the spaced apart elongate strips 166. Preferably, six such strips 166 are provided. However, other suitable numbers of strips may also be used.

[0112] With continued reference to Figure 13, the strips 166 preferably extend generally parallel to the longitudinal axis A_S of the sleeve, except that at the distal end of each strip, a flared portion 165 is biased generally outwardly. Preferably, the strip 166 bends at a transition portion 167 to transition from the generally straight portion of the strip to the flared portions 165. In the illustrated embodiment, the flared portions 165 also extend somewhat in a direction generally transverse to the longitudinal axis A_S .

[0113] Preferably, a resilient annular member, such as an elastic ring 168, is positioned toward the distal end 163 of the introducer sleeve 162 at or adjacent the transition portions 167 of the elongate strips 166. Desirably, the elastic ring 168 is configured to bias the strips 166 into a reduced-diameter portion, which is operable to ease insertion of the introducer sleeve 162 into an incision in the pericardium, as is described in greater detail below.

[0114] With particular reference to Figure 14, the dilator sleeve 164 preferably is a thin-walled, tubular member, which is also substantially circular in cross-section. An outer diameter of the dilator sleeve 164 is configured to be slightly smaller than an inner diameter of the introducer sleeve 162. Accordingly, the dilator sleeve 164 may be slidably inserted within the introducer sleeve 162, as illustrated in Figure 15. The dilator sleeve 164 may also

have an enlarged diameter portion 170 on its proximal most end to limit the insertion within the introducer sleeve 162. Further, a releasable locking system may be provided so that the dilator sleeve 164 may be releasably engaged with the introducer sleeve 162.

[0115] In the assembled condition illustrated in Figure 15, the dilator sleeve 164 presses against an inner surface of the reduced-diameter portion of the introducer sleeve 162 to force the reduced-diameter portion outward against the biasing force provided by the elastic ring 168. Thus, in the assembled configuration, the reduced diameter portion of the introducer sleeve 162 is enlarged and the introducer assembly 160 is configured to provide an access pathway for the delivery device 30. Preferably, an inner diameter of the sleeve 164 is greater than an outer diameter of the delivery device 30 so that the device can be advanced through the sleeve 164.

[0116] Figure 16 illustrates a human heart 172, which is enclosed within a pericardium 174. To permit introduction of the delivery device 30 to within the pericardium 174, preferably, a small incision 176 is made in the pericardium 174 adjacent the apex of the heart. With reference next to Figure 17, the introducer sleeve 162, in its contracted orientation, is introduced into and through the incision 176. In practice, one side of the distal end of the introducer sleeve 162 may be inserted into the incision 176 first, followed by the remaining side.

[0117] With reference next to Figure 18, once the flared portions 165 of the introducer sleeve 162 have been advanced through the slit 176, the dilator sleeve 164 is then introduced within the introducer sleeve 162 to urge the introducer sleeve 162 into its expanded configuration. In this configuration, the flared portions 165 are expanded to a diameter greater than the diameter of the rest of the introducer sleeve 162 and preferably greater than the size of the incision 176. As such, the flared portions 165 press upon and open the incision 176 and the surrounding portion of the pericardium so as to create a space between at least part of the pericardium and the heart. Further, the flared portions 165 function as a lock to resist pulling the introducer out of the incision 176. Accordingly, the introducer assembly 160 is effectively locked in place between the heart 172 and the pericardium 174.

[0118] Since the dilator sleeve 164 dilates the introducer sleeve 162, an access pathway is created to allow the delivery device 30 to be advanced therethrough and through the pericardium. The delivery device 30 is advanced through the pathway so as to deliver the cardiac harness 42 onto the heart 172. When the procedure is completed, the delivery device 30 is retracted through the access pathway and the introducer arrangement 160 is removed in generally the reverse order of the insertion.

[0119] As discussed above, in an additional embodiment the housing 36 is generally elliptical. It is to be understood that, in still further embodiments, the introducer sleeve 162 and dilator sleeve 164 are also elliptical, having a major axis and a minor axis. Further, each of these components may have any desired cross-sectional shape. As such, they may have a shape that is customized for any desired type or shape of minimally invasive surgical entry path.

[0120] Figures 19-23 illustrate the use of a delivery device 30, preferably configured substantially as described above, to deliver a cardiac harness 42 onto a heart 172. Preferably, the delivery device 30 is configured to locate and grasp the heart 172, accurately position the cardiac harness 42 onto the heart 172, and permit withdrawal of the delivery device 30 without disturbing the positioning of the cardiac harness 42.

[0121] With reference to Figure 19, preferably, the suction cup 52 of the delivery device 30 engages an apex portion 180 of the heart 172, which is illustrated schematically in Figures 19-23. The distal end of the delivery device 30 may access the heart 172 through any suitable method, but preferably through a minimally invasive procedure such as that described in relation to Figures 16-18. In Figures 19-23, the pericardium 174 (Figure 16) is omitted to ease illustration.

[0122] A pump device, such as a syringe 182, is connected to the hose 54 through the connector 58. Desirably, the syringe 182 is connected to the hose 54 with the plunger 184 in a compressed position. Once connected, the plunger 184 is retracted (as indicated by the arrow 185 in Figure 19) to create a vacuum condition within the hose 54 and, thus, within the space defined by the interior of the suction cup member 52. Due to the vacuum condition, the suction cup member 52 grasps the apex 180 such that the heart 172 is held in a desired position relative to the delivery device 30.

[0123] Preferably, the connector 58 includes a one-way valve 59 that is configured to inhibit air from flowing from the syringe to the tube 54 through the connector 58. Accordingly, the syringe 182 may be removed from the tube 54 once a vacuum condition has been created. Although a syringe 182 is preferred as a pump member due to its simplicity and low cost, other suitable pump devices may also be used to create a vacuum within the tube 54, as will be appreciated by one of skill in the art.

[0124] With reference next to Figure 20, once the delivery device 30 has been properly secured to the base 180 of the heart 172, the control assembly 38 may be advanced, relative to the shaft 34, toward the heart 172, as indicated by the arrow 186 in Figure 20. The plurality of push rods 40 are advanced toward the heart 172 with the control assembly 38 thereby advancing the cardiac harness 42 from its compacted configuration within the housing 36 onto the heart 172 in a direction from the base 188 to the apex 180, as indicated by the arrow 190 in Figure 20. As shown, the harness 42 preferably stretches elastically to fit over the heart. However, it is to be understood that a substantially non-elastic harness embodiment can also be delivered by this device and method.

[0125] As illustrated in Figure 20, the plurality of push rods 40 splay outwardly to conform to the shape of the heart 172 as they are advanced relative to the shaft 34 of the delivery device 30. As described above, preferably the tips 154 of the push rods 40 are canted at an outward angle θ relative to the remainder of the push rod 40 such that contact of the tip 154 with the heart 172 is generally avoided, thereby preventing trauma to the heart 172.

[0126] With reference to Figure 21, the control assembly 38 continues to be advanced until the cardiac harness 42 is properly positioned on the heart 172. Once the cardiac harness 42 is properly positioned, the release member 136 is pulled away from the main body 112 of the control assembly 38, as indicated by the arrow 192. Accordingly, the cardiac harness 42 is released from the plurality of push rods 40, preferably in a manner similar to that described above with reference to Figures 11a-c.

[0127] With reference to Figure 22, once the cardiac harness 42 has been released from the plurality of push rods 40, the generally-elastic harness preferably contracts onto the heart. The control assembly 38 is then retracted relative to the shaft 34 to retract the plurality

of push rods 40 from the cardiac harness 42, which remains on the heart 172. As noted above, preferably, the push rods 40 are configured such that retraction of the push rods 40 does not tend to pull the cardiac harness 42 from its desired position on the heart 172. Specifically, in the illustrated embodiment, the outwardly canted tips 154 of the plurality of push rods 40 help prevent the push rods 40 from exerting a pulling force on the cardiac harness 42.

[0128] With reference to Figure 23, once the plurality of push rods have been fully retracted from the cardiac harness 42 and the heart 172, the one-way valve 59 within the connector 58 may be opened to release the vacuum condition with the tube 54. As a result, the delivery device 30 may be removed from the heart 172, as indicated by the arrow 194 in Figure 23, as the suction cup member 52 is no longer grasping the heart 172. Thus, the delivery device 30 is retracted from the heart, leaving the cardiac harness 42 in place.

[0129] As discussed above, the delivery device 30 holds the cardiac harness 42 at several spaced apart locations. As such, the device exerts a distributed hold on the harness 42. Due to the distributed hold, the device can be used to advance the harness 42 as discussed above and also can be used to adjust the positioning and orientation of the harness without substantially deforming the harness 42. For example, if the harness is advanced distally farther than desired, the control assembly 38 can be pulled proximally somewhat in order to fine tune the position of the harness relative to the heart. Due to the distributed hold between the device 30 and the harness 42, the harness will move proximally as desired without substantial deformation, such as folding over itself or the like. Furthermore, in another embodiment, the position of the harness can be adjusted not only distally and proximally but also rotationally without substantially deforming the harness.

[0130] Although the delivery device 30 is especially well suited for use in a minimally invasive delivery procedure, the device 30 may also be used for open chest procedures, wherein the sternum of the patient is split to provide access to the heart 172. Accordingly, the delivery device 30 may be used with or without the delivery arrangement illustrated in Figures 13-18. In addition, although the device 30 described herein utilizes a plurality of push rods 40, other suitable structures may also be used as support structures to support the cardiac harness 40, when being advanced over the heart. For example, an

expandable sleeve can serve as a support structure. Furthermore, it is to be understood that a cardiac harness 42 may be releasably supported in an expanded, or substantially expanded, configuration to a variety of support structures by the releasable stitch described herein, or by a similar releasable stitch arrangement.

[0131] With reference next to Figures 24-27, an embodiment of a cardiac harness loading device 200 is illustrated. The loading device 200 is configured to cooperate with the delivery device 30 to support the plurality of push rods 40 in an outwardly splayed orientation so that the cardiac harness 42 may be secured to the push rods 40. The loading device 200 may also be useful to assist in urging the cardiac harness 42 from an expanded or at rest configuration to a compacted configuration, so as to be insertable into the housing 36 of the delivery device 30.

[0132] The illustrated loading device 200 is generally funnel shaped, having a cone-shaped upper portion 202 extending upwardly from a generally cylindrical lower portion 204. The lower portion 204 includes a pocket 206, which is configured to receive a distal end of the delivery device 30, and more specifically the suction cup member 52. In a preferred embodiment, however, the suction cup is removed while the harness is loaded, and is attached after the loading of the harness is complete.

[0133] Preferably, the loading device 200 is a thin-walled hollow member and, in the illustrated embodiment, is constructed from a pair of mirror image halves 200a, 200b (Figure 26) coupled to one another by a pair of pinned flanges 205a, 205b. That is, a pin 207 extends through a cavity extending through each half 200a, 200b within each flange 205a, 205b, thereby securing the halves 200a, 200b to one another. It is to be understood that the halves 200a, 200b may be coupled in any manner. In an additional embodiment, the loading device comprises a single member.

[0134] With particular reference to figures 25 and 26, a plurality of channels 208 preferably extend upwardly from the pocket 206 and terminate at the open, upper end of the cone-shaped upper portion 202. Desirably, each of the channels 208 is shaped to receive one of the plurality of push rods 40 and, preferably, are shaped generally complementary to the shape of the push rods 40. Therefore, desirably, the number of channels 208 provided is equal to the number of push rods 40 present in the delivery device 30. Thus, each channel

208 is configured to receive and position one of the plurality of push rods 40 in an appropriate splayed position such that the cardiac harness 42 may be releasably secured thereto.

[0135] A lower portion 208a of each channel 208 preferably is substantially parallel to a center axis of the delivery device 30 when the distal end of the device 30 is positioned within the pocket 206 of the loading device 200. An upper portion 208b of the channel 208, corresponding with the upper portion 202 of the loading device 200, preferably is splayed in an outward direction relative to the lower portion 208a. Thus, when received within the upper portion 208b of the channels 208, the push rods 40 preferably are oriented in a splayed configuration, similar to the position assumed when the push rods 40 are positioned over a heart.

[0136] Desirably, the loading device 200 includes a plurality of cut out portions 210 corresponding with an elongate portion of each upper portion 208b of the channels 208. Preferably, the cut out portions 210 are disposed on an outer surface of the loading device 200 and expose an elongate portion of a push rod 40 disposed in the upper portion 208b of the channel 208 (see Figure 27). In addition, preferably the entire channel 208 is open toward an inner surface of the loading device 200. Desirably, the cut out portions 210 correspond with a portion of the corresponding push rods 40 in which the through holes 62, 64a-i (Figure 5) are provided. As such, the loading device 200 secures the push rods 40 in a splayed orientation with the through holes 62, 64a-i exposed so that the cardiac harness 42 may be releasably secured to each of the push rods 40 by a releasable stitch.

[0137] Figure 27 illustrates a cardiac harness 42 disposed in the loading device 200 along with and adjacent the push rods 40. In the illustrated arrangement, the harness 42 is ready to be secured to the push rods 40.

[0138] With reference next to Figures 28a-c, a preferred method for creating the releasable stitch from a line 60a is illustrated. With reference to Figure 28a, the cardiac harness 42 preferably is positioned relative to the push rod 40 such that an upper most row 66a of the harness 42 is positioned between through holes 62 and 64a of the push rod 40, or the two uppermost through holes. The line 60a is passed along the inward facing surface 40b of the push rod 40 in an upward direction positioning the cardiac harness 42 between the line

60a and the surface 40b of the push rod 40. An upper end of the line 60a is passed through the through hole 62 and, preferably, formed into a slip knot 80, which forms the initial loop 82a of the releasable stitch.

[0139] With reference to Figure 28c, preferably an instrument, such as a hook 220 is passed through the loop 82a and grasps a portion of the line 60a below the upper row 66a of the cardiac harness 42. The line 60a is pulled through the through hole 64a and through the initial loop 82a, to secure the upper row 66a of the cardiac harness 42 to the push rod 40. With reference to 28c, the line 60a is pulled further through the loop 82a to create the second loop 82b. This process is repeated until each of the rows 66a-h are secured to each of the plurality of push rods 40. With reference again to Figure 5, the final loop, or retention loop 86a, preferably is retained by the rod 68a of the release member 136, as previously described. In addition, preferably the end 100a of the line 60a is tied off on the release member 136, as also described above.

[0140] With reference again to Figure 27, once the cardiac harness 42 is releasably secured to each of the push rods 40, the control assembly 38 may be retracted relative to the shaft 34 to retract the push rods 40 and, thus, retract the cardiac harness 42 into its compacted configuration within the housing 36 of the delivery device 30 (as illustrated in Figure 2). As described above, the funnel shape of the upper portion 202 and the cylindrical shape of the lower portion 204 of the loading device 200 assist in urging the cardiac harness 42 from its expanded configuration into its compacted configuration.

[0141] With reference next to Figures 29-32, another embodiment of a control assembly 238 and associated push rods 240 is illustrated. In the illustrated embodiment, the control assembly 238 comprises a body portion 242 and a handle portion 244 which are configured to slide axially over the shaft 34.

[0142] With particular reference to Figure 29, the body portion 242 includes a first and a second friction brake assembly 246, 248. Preferably, each friction brake assembly 246, 248 is constructed in a manner similar to the assembly 102 described above in connection with Figures 6-9. However, the pivoting direction and orientation of the brake element 104 portion in the first brake assembly 246 is reversed relative to such orientation in the second brake assembly 248. As such, axial movement of the control assembly 238 over

the shaft 34 can be selectively inhibited in either a distal or proximal direction by selectively engaging the first or second brake assembly 246, 248.

[0143] With particular reference to Figures 30-32, the elongate push rod 240 includes a plurality of through holes, or openings 262, 264 extending therethrough. The push rod 240 is configured to accept a releasable stitch such as that discussed above in connection with Figure 5 and as will be discussed below in connection with Figure 33. Preferably, the push rod is constructed of a radiopaque material.

[0144] With more particular reference to Figure 31, a distal tip 249 of the push rod 240 comprises a generally barrell-shapedatraumatic tip portion 260. It is to be understood, however, that the atraumatic tip 260 can be shaped in several different ways in order to minimize the likelihood that the tip will puncture, scratch or otherwise traumatize tissue. For example, the tip can be folded over, be generally teardrop shaped, or be generally cylindrical.

[0145] With particular reference next to Figures 30 and 32, a proximal region 266 of the push rod 240 comprises a plurality of ribs 270 attached to a spine 271 of the rod 240. The ribs 270 extend outwardly and function to increase the rigidity of the rod in the proximal region 266. An elongate passage 272 is formed between the ribs, and defines a line path 272 configured to accommodate a line 60a extending therethrough. The ribs 270 increase the rigidity of the push rod 240 in the proximal region 266. As such, the push rod 240 is more flexible in a distal region 273 than in the proximal region 266. It is to be understood that, in other embodiments, further structural or material strategies can be used to further vary the flexibility of push rods along their length.

[0146] In the illustrated embodiment, the ribs 270 do not extend all the way to a proximal end 274 of the push rod 240. At or near the proximal end, a pair of cutouts 276 are formed at opposite sides of the push rod.

[0147] With reference again to Figures 29 and 30, a series of passages 250 are formed in the body 242 of the control assembly 238. Each passage 250 comprises a rod portion 252 and a line portion 254. The rod portions 256 are configured so that the proximal end 274 of each push rod 240 fits into the rod portion 252 of the passage 250. The line portions 254 generally align with the line path 272 between the ribs 210 of the installed push

rod 240, and thus provides a passage for the line 60a to travel into the control assembly 238. A pair of pin passages 256 are formed in the control assembly corresponding to each rod passage. The pin passages 256 are configured to generally align with the cutouts 276 at the proximal end 274 of each push rod 240. Locking pins 258 (see Figure 34) are inserted into the pin passages 256 and through the cutouts 276 in order to support the push rod 240 in place in the control assembly 238.

[0148] With reference next to Figure 33, another arrangement for releasably holding a harness 42 onto a push rod 40 is illustrated. This embodiment is quite similar to the embodiment discussed above in connection with Figure 5, in that several interconnected loops 82a-h are arranged to create securing portions 84a-h of a line 60a in order to engage and secure rows 66a-h of the cardiac harness 42 to secure the harness onto the push rod 40. In the illustrated embodiment, a proximal-most loop, referred to as a free loop 280, extends along an outer surface 40a of the push rod 40 proximal of a proximal-most throughhole 64i. A retaining loop 282 portion of the line 60a extends from the inner surface 40b of the push rod 40 through the hole 64i and loops about the free loop 280. From the retaining loop 282, an end portion 100a of the line 60a extends to the release member 68. Tension in the line 60a holds the free loop 280 in place, and a friction force resists drawing of the free loop 280 through the retaining loop 282 in order to release the releasable stitch. Further, in this arrangement, only a single line 60a is drawn down through the line path 272 and into the control assembly 38 or 238.

[0149] With continued reference to Figure 33, once the harness 42 is in place upon a patient's heart, the release member 68 is actuated in order to pull the line 60a. As such, the retaining loop 282 engages and pulls on the free loop 280. This interaction between the loops 280, 282 creates frictional resistance; however, upon continued pulling by the clinician, the frictional resistance is overcome and the retaining loop 282 is disengaged from the free loop 280, at which point the releasable stitch disengages in the same manner as discussed above with reference to Figures 11a-c.

[0150] In the illustrated embodiment, the push rod 40 resembles the push rod 40 presented in Figure 5. It is to be understood that the just-discussed embodiment can also be

employed in connection with a push rod 240 as depicted in Figures 30-32, or with any suitable push rod.

[0151] With reference next to Figure 34, an interior view of the control assembly 238 of Figure 29 is shown. In this embodiment, the line and stitching arrangement of Figure 33 is employed. As such, only a single line 100a extends into the control assembly 238 from each push rod 240, and no loop extends into the control assembly 238. An end of each line 100a-f is tied onto the release member 268. As shown in Figure 34, (channels 284a,b, 286a,b extend between each control assembly passage line portion to the release member 268 in order to accommodate each line 100a-f. The lines 100a-f associated with each push rod 240 extend through the associated channels 284a,b, 286a,b to the release member 268. As such, when the release member 268 is pulled outwardly, the lines 100a-f are pulled so as to release the loops holding the harness 42 onto the push rod.

[0152] In the embodiments disclosed herein, the illustrated cardiac harness 42 is formed of several rows of elastic elements. The illustrated harness comprises undulating wire arranged in several adjacent rings, each of which comprises an elastic row. As illustrated, the harness 42 is releasably attached to the push rods by a stitch being wound around some or all of the rows. Of course, it is to be understood that aspects of the present invention can be employed with harnesses having different structure than the illustrated harness, which is included for example only. For example, any harness having one or more openings that could accommodate the releasable stitch could be used such as, for example, a harness formed of a woven or non-woven fibrous material and/or a harness formed of a mesh, honeycomb or other type of material.

[0153] Although the present invention has been described in the context of a preferred embodiment, it is not intended to limit the invention to the embodiment described. Accordingly, modifications may be made to the disclosed embodiment without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. For example, any of a variety of suitable releasable stitches, or other releasing mechanisms, may be used. It is also contemplated that various combinations or subcombinations of the specific features and aspects of the embodiments discussed herein may be made. Accordingly, various features and aspects of the disclosed embodiments can be combined with or substituted for one another in order to

form varying modes of the invention. In addition, although the illustrated device 30 is well suited for delivering a cardiac harness through a minimally invasive procedure, the illustrated device 30, or alternative arrangements thereof, may also be used in an open chest procedure. Accordingly, the invention is intended to be defined only by the claims that follow.